



Cabinet Member Report for Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning

Northampton Borough Council

27th October 2014

Town Centre

In September Aflora & Luxe Gifts opened a new store in Market Walk thanks to support from the Borough Council's Business Incentive Scheme. In just six months almost £200,000 in grants have been agreed, helping more than 20 businesses start up, make improvements, relocate or expand. This has led to over £1.2m in private sector funding coming back into Northampton and over 50 new jobs being created.

Increased use of our Car Parks as a result of the free parking offer brings more people, so a new cleaning regime has been introduced to improve the standard of cleanliness in our Town Centre Multi Storey Car Parks. Work is also underway to improve the landscaping in and around our surface car parks. Further enhancements are being explored to make them more pleasant and attractive to visitors.

Regeneration

On 8th October, Cabinet met and approved the next key steps to progress the redevelopment of the former Vulcan Works and the creation of a creative industries hub in our town's Cultural Quarter. The Creative Hub, which is one of the latest projects to join the Northampton Alive programme, will be situated in the heart of the Cultural Quarter in Guildhall Road and will provide an environment for creative 60 businesses and around 240 jobs. Work on Vulcan Works will begin in 2015 with completion expected by December 2016.

The top of Guildhall Road has been temporarily closed to traffic so that work can be conducted to further enhance the Cultural Quarter. The work will improve Guildhall Road so that it can support the organisations and businesses within the Cultural Quarter as part of the Borough Council's work to attract more visitors and stimulate the local economy. Guildhall Road is the heart of Northampton's growing Cultural Quarter, and work will take place to widen the pavements, allowing space for outdoor café tables and street entertainment. There will be parking spaces on both sides of the road and more spaces will be created in the lower part of Guildhall Road. Work is set to be completed by 20th November, ready for Christmas shoppers and the panto season.

The future provision of a refreshment facility at Delapre Abbey has been secured after agreement between the Borough Council and the Friends of Delapre Abbey. The new permanent location will be within the 19th century stable block. Every year thousands of people visit the historic abbey and the current Friends of Delapre Abbey (FoDA) tea room has provided a place to sit and relax in the beautiful surroundings.

We are committing over a million pounds into the restoration of the Delapre Abbey, and has secured grants from both Heritage Lottery Fund and English Heritage that will see more than £7 million invested in preserving our history. This work will mean that over

the next few years the abbey will not only be protected for future generations but plans are in place for it to become a regionally significant attraction with a refreshment facility being part of the offer. The first phase, replacing the roof of the Abbey, is nearing completion. Tenders for the main contract have been evaluated and a start on site is imminent.

We are providing an upgrade in power supply to support businesses in the Waterside Enterprise Zone. The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) has already approved a £900,000 Local Infrastructure Fund loan towards the overall cost of the project. Business expansion in our Enterprise Zone, particularly in the St James Mill Road area, mean that the power supply is stretched to the limit. With Cosworth set to open its new Advanced Manufacturing Centre and Freefoam looking to increase capacity, the infrastructure is desperately in need of an upgrade. We are doing all we can to make life easier for businesses, which is paying off in terms of private sector investment and job creation.

Planning

The Inspector's report on the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy has been published, and we are disappointed that the Plan was found to be sound and fit for adoption, despite our representations to the contrary. We made it quite clear that we could not support development that placed additional pressure on an already overloaded infrastructure, and we will continue to fight for a reasonable solution for Northampton. The Report will be considered by the West Northamptonshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee later in the year, when we will once more make our views known.

Councillor Tim Hadland

Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning